

31 October 2024

Via email - responsiblecamping@mbie.govt.nz

SUBMISSION TO THE MINISTRY OF BUSINESS INNOVATION AND EMPLOYMENT ON AMENDMENTS TO THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD FOR CERTIFICATION OF PRIVATELY OWNED SELF-CONTAINED CAMPING VEHICLES

Thank you for the opportunity to present Queenstown Lakes District Council's (QLDC) feedback to the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE) on the amendments to the transitional period for certification of privately owned self-contained camping vehicles (**the amendments**).

The QLDC context

The Queenstown Lakes District (**QLD or the district**) is one of the most popular camping destinations in Aotearoa New Zealand. QLD is the most popular place for 'free camping' in the country¹. QLDC is cognisant of the scale and popularity of freedom camping in the district, and its potential impacts that this has on the environment and local communities. With this in mind, QLDC considers that the effective and efficient certification of privately owned self-contained camping vehicles is critical to manage the effects of freedom camping activities.

To address the destination management benefits and challenges the QLD faces, QLDC partnered with Lake Wānaka Tourism, Destination Queenstown, Kāi Tahu and the Department of Conservation to develop 'Travel to a thriving future Haereka whakamu ki to ao taurikura'² - a regenerative tourism plan with a fundamental objective to be a leader in regenerative tourism and destination management.

As a proactive non regulatory approach to manage the potential effects of freedom camping in the district, QLDC adopted its Responsible Camping Strategy 2022 – 2027³. The Strategy contains a range of principles, objectives and actions intended to ensure that *'all campers who visit our region respect our environment, give back to our communities, and enjoy our beautiful landscapes sustainably'*.

In principle, QLDC supports the introduction of legislation, associated regulations and infringements that enhance the capacity and capability of local authorities to manage the effects of freedom camping.

QLDCs preferred option - That the transitional period for privately owned vehicles is not extended.

In principle, QLDC does not support any amendments to the Self-Contained Motor Vehicles Legislation Act 2023 (**the Act**). QLDC strongly supports the regulations for self-containment certification within the Act, and its existing transitional arrangements.

QLDC acknowledges the constraints associated with certification capacity set out within the MBIE consultation document and is cognisant of the challenges this presents to all stakeholders. However, given low uptake experienced to date, QLDC is not convinced that extending the existing transitional period will evenly spread the certification demand. Instead, QLDC is concerned that any extension will only displace the status quo to the end of any amended

¹ The total number of overnight stays between July 2023 – June 2024 being 6,455, or more than double the number of overnight stays at the next most popular territorial authority area - Campermate app, Overnight Stays at 'free camps', July 2023 – June 2024

² <https://www.qldc.govt.nz/media/iazdvtln/item-3a-dmp-attachment-1-queenstown-lakes-regenerative-tourism-plan.pdf>

³ https://webadmin.qldc.govt.nz/media/3penn2hc/qldc_responsible-camping-strategy_july24_web.pdf

transitional period, leading to the same issues resurfacing later, potentially with even greater consequences. This situation will burden local authorities in their administration, education and enforcement activities, and further erode the social license of freedom camping amongst local communities.

In the first instance, QLDC considers that alternative methods should be considered to improve the uptake of new certifications. This may include MBIE investing in intensive communication campaigns, and developing collaborative partnerships with key private sector actors to bring urgent attention to the obligations of private owners of self-contained camping vehicles. A further alternative could be to expand the remit of certification providers so as to rapidly increase the number of available certifiers.

QLDCs view on an alternative option – That a small extension be granted with additional support for territorial authorities.

If MBIE were to determine that an extension to the existing transitional arrangements was absolutely necessary, QLDC would prefer a minimal extension not exceeding one year (i.e. option 1). If this short extension were to be granted, QLDC requests that MBIE partner with territorial authorities to address the potential effects of any extension, including to further invest in infrastructure, national freedom camping education and monitoring solutions to support the important role that territorial authorities play in managing the effects of freedom camping activities.

QLDCs view on the default position of the Freedom Camping Act 2011

The Freedom Camping Act 2011 provides that freedom camping is permitted in any local authority area, unless it is restricted or prohibited in that area⁴ under a bylaw⁵. While QLDC accepts that this is the current legislative framework for the management of freedom camping activities, QLDC opposes this starting presumption and recommends that the Freedom Camping Act 2011 operate in the reverse i.e. that freedom camping is prohibited unless permitted or restricted in a bylaw.

QLDC advocates that Freedom Camping Act 2011 be amended such that this default position is reversed, in order to create a framework that more efficiently and effectively allows local authorities to manage the material impacts of freedom camping activities.

QLDC would like the opportunity to be heard at any hearings that result from this consultation process and would welcome any other opportunities to engage directly with MBIE on any proposed amendments.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely,



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Community Services**

⁴ Section 10(1)

⁵ Section 11